

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

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S E C R E T BUENOS AIRES 6130

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SHUM, AR, US

SUBJECT: OTHER ASPECTS OF SEPTEMBER 17 CONVERSATION WITH FOREIGN
MINISTER REF: BUENOS AIRES 6100

1. I CALLED ON FONMIN GUZZETTI AT HIS REQUEST SEPT 17, THE FIRST TIME I HAD SEEN HIM SINCE MY RETURN TO POST. HE OPENED THE CONVERSATION BY ASKING ME HOW I HAD FOUND THE ATMOSPHERE IN THE US. I REPLIED THAT EVERYWHERE I HAD GONE I HAD FOUND THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN ARGENTINA TO BE THE BURNING ISSUE IN TERMS OF US-ARGENTINA RELATIONS. I EXPLAINED TO HIM THAT THERE WAS A GOOD DEAL OF SYMPATHY IN THE US FOR THE VIDELA GOVT BUT THAT WHEN SUCH ACTS AS THE MURDER OF THE PRIESTS ON JULY 4 AND THE RECENT MASS MURDER IN PILAR WENT UNPUNISHED, IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR ARGENTINA'S FRIENDS TO ARGUE THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS DOING ALL IT SHOULD TO GET THE SITUATION UNDER CONTROL.

2. GUZZETTI REACTED WITH EMOTION TO MY MENTION OF THE MASS MURDER AT PILAR. HE SAID THIS WAS A TERRIBLE THING AND A DISGRACE TO THE WHOLE GOVERNMENT. HE ASSURED ME THAT HE, ADMIRAL MASSERA, PRESIDENT VIDELA AND ALL OTHER SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE GOVT WERE OUTRAGED. WHEN I ASKED HIM IF, THEN, THOSE RESPONSIBLE WOULD BE DISCIPLINED, HE REPLIED THAT THIS WAS A VERY DIFFICULT QUESTION. IT WAS VERY DIFFICULT, HE SAID, FOR PRESIDENT VIDELA TO BRING TO JUSTICE THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS AND OTHER OUTRAGES UNTIL HE HAD CONSOLIDATED HIS OWN POSITION. BUT, GUZZETTI WENT ON, THERE WAS IMPROVEMENT IN THIS AREA AND HE FELT GOVERNMENT WAS BEGINNING TO GET THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION

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IN HAND.

3. THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID GOA HAD BEEN SOMEWHAT SURPRISED BY INDICATIONS OF SUCH STRONG CONCERN ON THE PART OF THE USG IN HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN ARGENTINA. WHEN HE HAD SEEN SECY OF STATE KISSINGER IN SANTIAGO, THE LATTER HAD SAID HE "HOPED THE ARGENTINE GOVT COULD GET THE TERRORIST PROBLEM UNDER CONTROL AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE." GUZZETTI SAID THAT HE HAD REPORTED THIS TO PRESIDENT VIDELA AND TO THE CABINET, AND THAT THEIR IMPRESSION HAD BEEN THAT USG'S OVERRIDING CONCERN WAS NOT HUMAN RIGHTS BUT RATHER THAT GOA "GET IT OVER QUICKLY".

4. I REPLIED THAT I DID NOT SEE ANY INCONSISTENCY IN THE POSITION OF THE USG. THE SECRETARY HAD INDICATED HE HOPED ARGENTINA WOULD WRAP UP THE TERRORIST PROBLEM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, AND THAT VIEW WAS CERTAINLY SHARED BY THE EMBASSY AND THE REST OF USG. BUT THIS IN NO WAY IMPLIED AN INSOUCIANT ATTITUDE REGARDING HUMAN RIGHTS. WE BELIEVED MURDERING PRIESTS AND DUMPING 47 BODIES IN THE STREET IN ONE DAY COULD NOT BE SEEN IN CONTEXT OF DEFEATING TERRORISTS QUICKLY; ON CONTRARY, SUCH ACTS WERE PROBABLY COUNTERPRODUCTIVE. WHAT USG HOPED WAS THAT GOA COULD SOON DEFEAT TERRORISTS, YES, BUT DO SO AS NEARLY AS POSSIBLE WITHIN THE LAW. I SAID IF ANY OTHER MEANING HAD BEEN PLACED ON THE SECRETARY'S REMARKS, I WAS SURE IT WAS A MISINTERPRETATION.

5. GUZZETTI THEN INFORMED ME OF AMBASSADOR MUSICH'S RESIGNATION (SEE REFTEL).

6. GUZZETTI EMPHASIZED THAT THE GOA ATTACHES GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE DEDICATION OF THE STATUE ON OCT 6, AND HE ASKED WHO WOULD REPRESENT THE USG. I INDICATED TO HIM THAT I WAS NOT CERTAIN AT THIS POINT WHO THE SENIOR USG REPRESENTATIVE WOULD BE, BUT THAT I WOULD INFORM HIM AS SOON AS THAT INFORMATION WAS IN HAND. (GIVEN THAT THE ARGENTINE FOREIGN MINISTER HIMSELF WILL BE PRESENT AT THE CEREMEONIES, I HOPE THAT AN APPROPRIATELY HIGH-LEVEL OFFICER OF THE USG WILL ALSO BE PRESENT).
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